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ABSTRACT

The paper describes an academic support program at Mercy College of Northwest Ohio. The Project Assuring Student Success (PASS) Program is multi-faceted and comprehensive, designed to help students find success in their academic endeavors. The first phase of this program was the development and implementation of the Student Success Center. Some of the services provided at the Student Success Center are skills development programs in areas such as time management, stress management, and study habits. Services provided through the center have been funded, in part, by grants from a local foundation and also a local hospital auxiliary group. During the second phase of this program, a faculty development series was implemented. Various workshops were presented, including teaching methods and styles, retention and academic advising, and working with learning disabled students. The final phase was the development and implementation of the Remedial Education Addressing Collegiate Hurdles (REACH) Program, which provides classes in basic reading, writing, and mathematics. Another component of REACH is a faculty-guided mentoring program. According to this report, prior to implementing the PASS Program, the college's retention rate had dropped to 82 percent. It is now 89 percent. (JA)

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Summary of the P.A.S.S. Program (Project Assuring Student Success) Mercy College of Northwest Ohio

Paper Submitted to the Community College Exemplary Initiatives, Vol. XI

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P.A.S.S. Program

The P.A.S.S. (Project Assuring Student Success) is a multi-faceted and comprehensive program at Mercy College of Northwest Ohio designed to help students be successful in their academic endeavors. The first phase of this program was the development and implementation of the Student Success Center. The second phase was the implementation of a corresponding faculty development series. The final phase was the development and implementation of the R.E.A.C.H. (Remedial Education Addressing Collegiate Hurdles) Program.

The first phase, Student Success Center, was implemented in April of 1998 for the purpose of providing the necessary services for students to be successful in their college endeavors. Services offered through the center provide opportunities for academic, social, personal, and spiritual growth. Some of the services offered at the center are skill development in such areas as time management, stress management, and study habits; counseling referrals; individual and group tutoring for academic subject areas; and assistance for students with diagnosed learning disabilities. Services

provided through the center have been funded, in part, by grants from a local foundation and also a local hospital auxiliary group.

The second phase, faculty development, was implemented fall of 1998. This faculty development series has focused on being student-centered. Some of the workshops presented include teaching methods and styles, retention and academic advising, learning communities (The Alverno College Model), working with learning disabled students, cultural diversity, classroom assessment techniques, and changing student demographics.

The final phase, R.E.A.C.H. Program, was implemented fall of 1999 and is designed for students who are deficient or struggling in multiple skill areas based on previous academic work and placement testing. The program provides three (3), three (3) credit classes in Basic Reading, Basic Writing, and Basic Mathematics. A two (2) credit course in Student Success Strategies and a one (1) credit course in Keyboarding are also required of R.E.A.C.H. students. In addition to these courses, a dedicated computer lab offering tutorial services in mathematics, writing, and general academic skills has been developed as part of this program. Students have access to interactive computer programs to help develop skills in these areas. A grant

was secured from a local foundation to underwrite the costs of operating this program for one (1) academic year.

A final component of this program for R.E.A.C.H. participants is a faculty-guided mentoring program. The faculty, in the General Education Division of the college, serve as mentors. The mentoring component consists of structured sessions, dialogue journals, and developing a peer learning community. A grant was secured from the Ohio Association for Developmental Education for developing the mentoring component.

The structured sessions focus primarily on cognitive and behavioral aspects of a student's adjustment. There are five (5) semi-structured sessions with students in which they assist with and support students in the process of goal setting, time management, identification and use of relevant campus resources, and on-going assessment of academic progress.

The second component of the faculty-guided mentoring program is Dialogue Journals. This activity is designed to address the affective dimension of the student's adjustment. Through the use of a series of guided prompts, as well as opportunities for unstructured responding, students engage in ongoing

dialogue with the mentors throughout the semester. The software package, *Student eJournal*, is utilized for this activity.

The final component of the mentoring program is the Peer Learning Community. This activity guided by the faculty mentors addresses the social aspect of the student's adjustment. Here the focus is on the development of supportive and collegial relationships with other students in the R.E.A.C.H. Program, as well as opportunities to develop relationships with other college students. This is achieved through interactions both in the classroom and through co-curricular activities.

Results of P.A.S.S. Program

Prior to implementing this program, the college's retention rate had dropped to eighty-two percent (82%). The retention rate for the college is now eighty-nine point seven percent (89.7%) after implementing this program.

In addition, the REACH program appears to be meeting its objectives after its first semester of operation. Specifically, of the nine (9) individuals comprising the first cohort of REACH students, five (5) successfully

completed all developmental course work *(Basic English, Basic Math, College Reading, Student Success Strategies,* and *Keyboarding)* in their first semester of enrollment. Two (2) students completed four (4) out of five (5) developmental classes, and received a grade of "Incomplete" in *College Reading.* It is anticipated that they will complete all requirements for this course within the first couple of weeks of Spring Semester 2000. One (1) student completed three (3) of the developmental courses and, consistent with her individual learning requirements, will continue work in *Basic English* and *College Reading* during the spring term. Only one (1) student in this cohort received a failing grade in any course. Finally, one (1) student withdrew from the program for non-academic reasons. When one considers the significant need for remediation in multiple skill areas required by REACH students, the college strongly believes that the initial results reported above speak to the benefits of this program. Moreover, the program's emphasis on skill building combined with psychosocial support appears to offer an appropriate and effective model for addressing the multifaceted needs of this population of learners.